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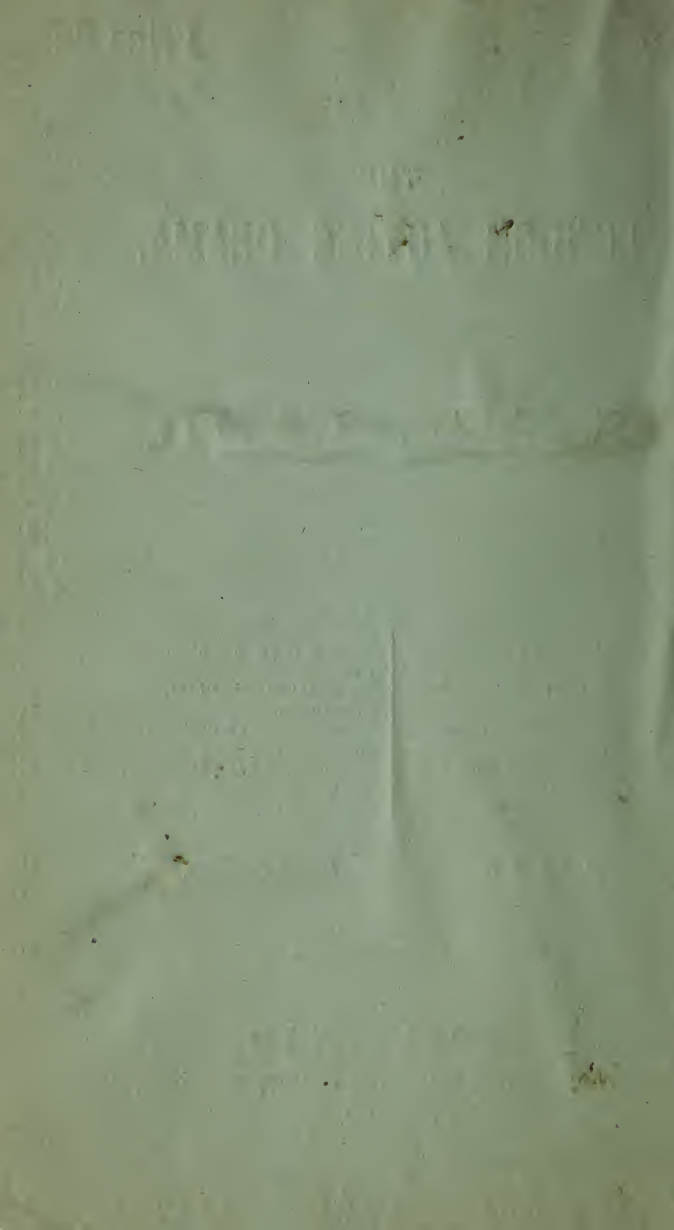
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STAGE LAND.

A Comedy,

IN THREE ACTS.

BY

G. R. DOUGLAS, Esq.

LONDON:

THOMAS SCOTT, WARWICK COURT,
HOLBORN.

STAGE LAND.

First performed at the Vaudeville Theatre, on Saturday Morning, January 2nd, 1875, under the direction of Mr. Edward Hastings.

Characters.

MAJOR-GENERAL SIR HAROLD

TREFUSIS, K.C.B. Mr. W. H. STEPHENS.

SIR BAYARD BEAUCOURT Mr. VYNER ROBINSON.

MAURICE LAWLEY Mr. LIN RAYNE.

PLATITUDE POTTER, M.P.,

F.R.G.S., F.S.A. Mr. CHARLES COLLETTE.

TRUCULENT Mr. E. ATKINS.

MRS. DANVERS DARLING

DASHWAY Miss ELEANOR BUFTON.

MISS TREFUSIS Mrs. CHARLES PITT.

MURIEL HEPBURN Miss AUGUSTA WILTON.

Servant.

ACT I.—MORNING CALLS.

ACT II.—REHEARSING.

ACT III.—NEW LOVES FOR OLD.

SCENE:

ACT I.—LONDON. ACTS II. & III.—ALMAHURST.

Time in Representation—Two Hours.

All applications for the performance of this Comedy must be made to EDWARD HASTINGS, 16, Gibson Square, Islington, N., London.

822
D7455

TO
R. B. M.

STAGE LAND.

ACT I.

MORNING CALLS.

SCENE.—*London. Drawing Room at Sir Harold Trefusis'.*

SIR HAROLD and MISS TREFUSIS *discovered.*

SIR HAROLD. My dear Diana, I merely wished to remind you that an establishment in London in the season is not maintained for nothing.

MISS TREFUSIS. And, my dear Harold, the reminder was perfectly superfluous, as all the money to pay for the establishment comes out of my pocket.

SIR H. (*angrily*) It was your own wish—it was——

MISS T. (*putting up her hands affectedly*) Now, now, don't stun me; don't speak as if you were giving the word of command. I know it was my desire to be in Town this season, and as, of course, you cannot afford it yourself, I offered to bear the whole of the expenses. That being the case, I wish to have full value for my money, and enjoy the season as long as possible.

SIR H. I'm sick of the season, I hate the season, I say d——

MISS T. Remember you're not in a mess-room, Sir Harold.

SIR H. Unhappily I am not. I'm sick of the noise, and the glare, and the worry, the Opera, the concerts and balls, with those simpering, sauntering, white waistcoated, bandolined simpletons. Bah! I wish the Crimean days were back again, and I had a few dozen of them out there; I'd give them fifteen hours in the trenches on a captain's biscuit for breakfast.

MISS T. We have received a most gratifying amount of attention, and met numbers of charming people.

SIR H. A set of insipid idiots. The only persons amongst them all whom I am glad to know are Sir Bayard Beaucourt and Mrs. Dashway.

MISS T. Mrs. Dashway! that dreadful woman!

SIR H. The most delightful woman I know— (*with emphasis*) without any exception whatever. She is to other women what a Field-Marshal, G.C.B., is to Private Jones of the Volunteers, A.S.S.

MISS T. (*solemnly*) I deeply regret that she ever obtained a footing in our house. There are strange stories concerning that woman.

SIR H. There generally are strange stories concerning a woman who is so attractive that she has all the men about her. The other women are so fond of her that they make her the heroine of various little romances.

MISS T. (*angrily*) Is it not a fact, that though she is still a young woman, she has been married three times, and that each of her husbands is dead?

SIR H. That's her good luck.

MISS T. Her good luck?

SIR H. I mean her husbands' bad luck.

MISS T. And she has the effrontery—the dreadful effrontery to use the names of all her husbands at once, and to wear them as an Indian on the war path does his scalps, to mark the number of her victims. Why, if she goes on marrying and being a widow at her present rate, by the time she is seventy her names will fill a whole Court Guide.

SIR H. (*chuckling*) Well, well, I know it's very aggravating that, with the ladies in such a large majority, one of their number should have three of the minority all to herself; but, as you tell your school-children at home, Diana, "Envy is a corroding passion." Ha, ha, ha! You mustn't be envious.

MISS T. (*with spiteful horror*) Envious! Of her! My sole reason for being glad to leave Town is to get away from her.

SIR H. Then don't be glad. For you won't.

MISS T. What—Harold—you cannot; you have not committed the incredible folly of asking her to Almahurst?

SIR H. Faith, but I have though.

MISS T. (*with resignation*) We are doomed! A woman who has immolated three husbands in ten years, will make short work of a household of strangers.

SIR H. Pooh, pooh! Ha, ha, ha! You are too absurd. Why, Sir Bayard said she would be invaluable in these forthcoming theatricals—the life and soul of the whole affair.

MISS T. She may be the life and soul of the whole affair but she will be the death and ruin of the actors in it and everyone else. However, the invitation cannot be revoked, suppose. We must prepare to meet our fate.

SIR H. Ha, ha, ha!

MISS T. But, mind if we are all found dead in our beds some morning, don't turn round upon me afterwards.

SIR H. Ha, ha, ha! My dear Diana, I hope I shall never turn in my grave either upon you or anyone else.

MISS T. You may laugh, Sir Harold.

SIR H. By Jove, I *must*! Ha, ha, ha!

MISS T. But with so many serious anxieties, I do not feel disposed to join you. There is that girl, Muriel, absolutely endangering her chance of so splendid a match in every way as Sir Bayard, by her careless, scornful way of treating him.

SIR H. (*sternly*) I would not have Muriel Hepburn, my ward, and the only child of my dearest friend, throw herself at any man's head. If she should prefer Sir Bayard, I shall be very glad, for I think he is a thorough good fellow. But I will not have the girl bullied or driven into marrying him because he is a baronet with plenty of money.

MISS T. Well, well—you will take your own course.

SIR H. I generally do, unless I am on active service, under the orders of the Commander-in-Chief.

MISS T. And may I enquire whether you have asked anyone else to Almahurst without my knowledge?

SIR H. Not I—not I. And if there is one reason more than another which makes me glad to leave London, it is to get out of earshot of that fellow Potter.

MISS T. (*triumphantly, imitating his former manner*) Then don't be glad. For you won't.

SIR H. Oh, confound it! You don't mean that you've asked him down to Almahurst?

MISS T. Indeed I have.

SIR H. (*mimicking her*) Then we are doomed! The man who can at any time talk the House of Commons down to six members, and all of those asleep except the Speaker, will make short work of sending a household of strangers into an eternal slumber.

MISS T. (*sarcastically*) Perhaps you would like Mr. Truculent as well?

SIR H. 'Egad, that's a happy thought! I *will* have Truculent. He'll be an antidote to Potter, and Potter is afraid of him. Moreover, as we're going in for theatricals, they wouldn't be complete without one of those deuced clever critics who could do everything so much better than everybody else, if they only chose to try.

MISS T. The party is mounting up.

SIR H. And there is this actor who is coming down with Sir Bayard to drill, and put people through their dramatic facings.

MISS T. Oh, well! he'll take his meals with the servants, of course?

SIR H. My dear Diana! He is an actor and a gentleman.

MISS T. An actor *and* a gentleman—oh, absurd!

SIR H. I say he is. He was at school or college with Sir Bayard; lost all his money and took to the stage for a living.

MISS T. And by adopting that disreputable profession absolves us from the necessity of receiving him as an equal.

SIR H. I am astonished to find that you are still influenced by that old prejudice—a prejudice which is rapidly passing away.

MISS T. I doubt whether it will altogether have disappeared in your time, Harold.

SIR H. Perhaps not; and that is all the more reason why I should strike a blow at it whilst I can.

MISS T. Well, you will hold your own opinions.

SIR H. (*drily*) I am indebted to you for the permission.

MISS T. And I shall continue to hold mine.

SIR H. I wouldn't deprive you of them for the world.

Enter SERVANT, L.

SERVANT. (*announces*) Mr. Truculent.

Enter TRUCULENT, L.—*Exit* SERVANT, L.

SIR H. (*aside*) Oh, now we shall hear wholesome truths.

TRUCULENT. How do you do, Sir Harold? How are you, Miss Trefusis? (*sits down*) I have called purposely before the afternoon tide of chattering nincompoops begins to set towards your drawing-room.

SIR H. (*laughing*) Hear, hear!

MISS T. We have been talking of you, Mr. Truculent.

TRUC. I'm very sorry to hear it. Whenever any one tells me that, I feel a guilty consciousness that my inopportune arrival has just deprived him or her of the pleasure of saying something monstrous witty at my expense.

SIR H. No, no, Truculent; too bad, too bad. We were wondering whether we could prevail upon you to join us at Almahurst next week. We shall be a large party, and some of them are going in for private theatricals.

TRUC. Hum—hum—you're very kind, Sir Harold, and I shall be most happy, apart from the theatricals, very much apart from them. I'm obliged to see a vast amount of professional incapacity, and I've no wish whatever to inspect any samples from the very large amateur surplus stock of it. Who are the leading incapables?

MISS T. Sir Bayard—

TRUC. Oh, Sir Bayard, of course. Well, Sir Bayard can act as well as any amateur I know, which is saying as much as that an elephant can fly as well as a rhinoceros.

SIR H. And then there's Mrs. Dashway—Mrs. Dashway. Truculent, what do you think of Mrs. Dashway?

TRUC. (*slowly*) What do I think of Mrs. Dashway? Why, I'd rather not say what I think of Mrs. Dashway.

MISS T. There, Sir Harold, there! What did I say?

SIR H. (*angrily*) Ridiculous! (*to TRUCULENT*) Diana has been talking the most absurd nonsense about Mrs. Dashway. As if it were a crime in her to have had three husbands.

TRUC. A crime? Highly creditable to her enterprise and ability.

SIR H. (*still more angry*) And it is nothing that they are all dead.

TRUC. Nothing to me, upon my soul. I don't know what it may be to them.

MISS T. (*sarcastically*) Perhaps you think that the fact, or rather the facts, for there are—or were—three, are likely to inspire confidence, Mr. Truculent.

TRUC. Well, no—I don't go altogether as far as that. Mrs. Dashway may seem a charming woman, and the captain of a ship might appear a delightful individual. But if I knew that the chances were three to nothing in favour of my coming to an untimely end on board his vessel, I think I should be tempted to embark on the matrimonial voyage under a different commander.

SIR H. (*fiercely*) We'll drop the subject—we'll drop the subject, Mr. Truculent, if you please. Can you tell us anything about this actor—Law—Lawley, who is coming down with Sir Bayard to direct and coach everyone?

TRUC. Well, he's at present playing in an entirely new and original five-acts-and-a-prologue drama at the Royal Grand-crash Theatre. Immense success; overflowing houses; crowds turned away from the doors; free-list necessarily suspended; places can be booked in advance up to Christmas—only the ungrateful public won't take advantage of this inestimable privilege, and the house will be closed next Saturday, as the receipts don't cover expenses.

SIR H. Can he act?

TRUC. (*reluctantly*) Well—yes—he *can* act.

SIR H. (*suddenly*) Oh, by the way, Truculent, Potter is coming down.

TRUC. (*rising*) Potter! Oh, he'll be an immense acquisition. You can play the "Maid and the Magpie" at once:—The Magpie—his original character—Mr. Platitude Potter; who has stolen a large number of other persons' valuable thoughts, and hidden them under vast heaps of rubbish of his own.

SIR H. (*loudly*) Ha, ha, ha!

MISS T. For shame, Mr. Truculent!

Enter SERVANT, L.

SERVANT. (*announces*) Mr. Potter!

Enter POTTER, L.—*Exit* SERVANT, L.

POTTER. Miss Trefusis, it seems an age since I saw you. Sir Harold, I hope the gout is better. Truculent, how are you?

TRUC. Just going.

SIR H. Can you look in later, Truculent? Our arrangements for next week cannot be finally settled till we have seen Sir Bayard. He is sure to be here directly.

TRUC. Very well, Sir Harold. (*goes to door, L., then stops*) Oh, Potter, I hear a testimonial is being got up for you.

POTTER. (*excited*) A testimonial!—How—where—what?

TRUC. From four united clubs—the Fossils, the Veto, the Tribunes, and the Midas—in appreciation of the admirable manner in which you have facilitated the dispatch of public business during the session.

MISS T. How interesting!

SIR H. (*aside*) Confounded humbug, if he's in earnest, which I don't believe.

POTTER. He, he, he! They are too good; my insignificant services——

TRUC. "Insignificant services?" (*reaching the door, and holding it open*) Fifteen counts-out in six weeks, thanks entirely to your noble oratorical exertions!

Exit, L.—SIR HAROLD, *after trying to restrain himself, bursts out laughing.*

MISS T. (*angrily*) That passes even Mr. Truculent's license of rudeness.

POTTER. (*trying to appear amused*) Oh,—He, he, he!—we all know Truculent. He is a "chartered libertine," as we say in the House. He has, as you observe, a license of rudeness, granted by people whom he amuses.

SIR H. Yes, they say he amuses them; but if the license expired, I doubt whether they would vote for its being renewed. You join us at Almahurst next week?

POTTER. (*volubly*) I shall be charmed, Sir Harold—most charmed, I am sure. The session is practically over, as I remarked to the Chancellor of the Exchequer this morning, and I shall be enchanted to make yours the first house on my list of visits. I am quite a bird of passage during the recess, flitting from one place to another. Theatricals you are to have too, I hear. A curious time, is it not? But then, Sir Bayard is so fond of them—and Miss Hepburn—eh? Oh, yes, yes, we understand. He, he, he! And as Parliament has risen so early, they will fill up the time till the shooting. For

myself, I am sorry the recess is so long, for to me it is as fatiguing as the session.

SIR H. (*aside*) And more so to his friends.

POTTER. And I delight in—he, he, he!—senatorial work—
“*Labor ipse voluptas*; “*Laborare est orare*,” and that noble passage from the Greek—perhaps you may remember it.

SIR H. (*with a groan*) May I be reduced to the ranks if I do.

POTTER. In the “Agamemnon of Æschylus.”

SIR H. (*aside*) Which he cribbed from the heading of a chapter in a novel, I’ll bet a guinea.

POTTER. “’Tis law as steadfast as the throne of Zeus,
Our days are heritors of days gone by.”

And, indeed——

Enter SERVANT, L.

SERVANT. (*announces*) Mrs. Dashway.

Enter MRS. DASHWAY.—Exit SERVANT, L.

MRS. DASHWAY. How do you do, Miss Trefusis? Mr. Potter! why, are you not on a Committee? Sir Harold, I haven’t seen you since—the day before yesterday.

SIR H. And in the interval the world has seemed——

MRS. D. No, no, don’t say that. I know what was coming, sunless or joyless, or something of that sort. What you might expect from a stupid Member of Parliament. (*aside*) Oh! I forgot. (*looks at POTTER—both laugh and sit on couch, R. —POTTER and MISS TREFUSIS on couch, L.*) but not from Sir Harold Trefusis, who has been at the Alma, and the Light Brigade Charge, and—all sorts of delightful places.

MISS T. I can assure you, Mr. Potter, that I take the deepest interest in Parliamentary topics; and, indeed, am glad of any chance of intellectual conversation in the very military atmosphere in which I live.

POTTER. I hold, Miss Trefusis, that the position of a Member of Parliament is the most dignified to which a man can aspire. I contend that it takes precedence—moral precedence of all other ranks, titles, dignities, and distinctions whatsoever; and I am of opinion that whilst a man is one of the representatives of the people, the letters which indicate that he enjoys that coveted honour, should be as much an integral portion of his name as is his baptismal appellation; and thus I would have myself addressed—Platitude Potter, M.P., Esq., &c.

SIR H. And can Mrs. Dashway honestly assure me that during the last few days her thoughts have ever reverted to me?

MRS. D. Can I? Of course I can. Do you know, Sir

HAROLD, you remind me of a dear old lion, whilst most of the other people I know seem more like well-fed spiteful donkeys, who only don't kick you, because it hurts you more to bray out gossip behind your back.

MISS T. Sir Harold's Crimean reminiscences are endless.

POTTER. A great mistake that war, an enormous mistake—a mistake to begin it, a mistake to carry it so far, and all for nothing. The name of the Crimea is one that we can hear only with feelings of humiliation.

SIR H. Eh, what's that?

MISS T. (*rising*) Nothing, nothing. Don't answer Mr. Potter. The subject is one on which you and Sir Harold are sure to disagree, and you had better not discuss it. (*looks at her watch*) I ordered the carriage at this time, as I have to call for Miss Hepburn, who has been lunching at the Scaleswaytes'.

POTTER. The Scaleswaytes? I was about to call there.

MISS T. Can I take you then? And we will return afterwards to see Sir Bayard, and hear about next week. I shall be ready immediately, and meanwhile don't argue with Sir Harold. *Exit.*

SIR H. Now, Mr. Potter, I should be glad to hear that observation about the Crimea again.

POTTER. I remarked, Sir Harold, that I thought it was high time we ceased to boast of anything connected with that war—a series of blunders and disasters, relieved only by a few victories purchased at too dear a cost, and whose sole lasting result is that its most famous incident—which was caused by an absurd mistake—has been celebrated in a poem that has been hackneyed at Penny Readings in every Mechanics' Institute throughout the kingdom.

SIR H. (*rising, in a rage*) Confound it, sir, is that the way you speak of—I beg pardon—I said—nothing. (*aside*) Forgetting myself in my own house.

Enter SERVANT, L.

SERVANT. The carriage, Mr. Potter. Miss Trefusis is ready. *Exit, L.*

POTTER. *Au revoir*, Sir Harold. We will discuss the subject at length on some future occasion.

SIR H. Not if you value your life!

POTTER. Oh, I have no fears! and in the cause of progress and emancipation from servile prejudices I am ever ready to stake all that is precious to Platitude Potter! *Exit, L.*

SIR H. Ugh!

MRS. D. Never mind him, Sir Harold. Don't think of the dreadful empty-headed chatterbox! I want you to come with me to Sobern's Gallery, in Pall Mall, to see a picture there.

SIR H. But I can't!

MRS. D. But you must!

SIR H. I can't! I expect Sir Bayard every minute, and there is no one at home but myself.

MRS. D. Well, surely you are intimate enough with Sir Bayard to ask him to wait here a quarter of an hour. We shall not be longer. I have the carriage with me. Leave word that you have gone out for ten minutes. Sir Bayard will forgive me—we are the best of friends.

SIR H. Mrs. Dashway, I would sooner lead a forlorn hope than refuse you anything!—but really—I don't see——

MRS. D. (*rising*) Sir Harold!

“Half a league—half a league——”

SIR H. (*excitedly*) Ha!

MRS. D. “Half a league onward——”

SIR H. Ha!

MRS. D. “All in the valley of death
Rode the Six Hundred!”

SIR H. Ha! (*rises and repeats the next lines with her*)

“‘Charge for the guns!’ he said.

Was there a man dismayed?

Not though the soldier knew

Some one had blundered!

Theirs not to make reply,

Theirs not to reason why,

Theirs but to do and die!

Into the valley of death

Rode the Six Hundred!

SIR H. Ha! ‘Gad, I feel better after that!

MRS. D. I said it to recall you to your duty.

Yours not to make reply,

Yours not to reason why——

Follow me!

SIR H. Mrs. Dashway, I'll follow you to the end of the world!

MRS. D. That's right! and before we go let us give a groan for Mr. Potter.

SIR H. Yah!

MRS. D. And three cheers for the Six Hundred! Hip—hip—hip—hurrah!

SIR H. Hip—hip—hip—hurrah!

BOTH. Hurrah!

Exeunt, L.

Enter SERVANT, L., after a short pause.

SERVANT. The gov'nor's apologies to Sir Bayard, if he should call before the gov'nor returns, and the gov'nor has

gone out with Mrs. Daswhay and will be back very shortly, if he'll be good enough to wait. That female Bluebeard, Mrs. Dashway is making up to the gov'nor. I wonder if—Hullo—a knock! Sir Bayard, of course, the instant the carriage is gone.

Exit, L.

Enter SIR BAYARD BEAUCOURT *and* MAURICE LAWLEY, L.

SIR BAYARD. Come along, Maurice, we'll wait here. I'm free of the house and a privileged person.

MAURICE. You've been the latter, Bayard, ever since I can recollect you. (*they sit down*)

SIR B. And I don't like it. The running's been made too easy for me all my life. All sunshine—too much cakes and ale; it can't last. When I was a youngster I used to have boxes of tin soldiers; officers and men all exactly alike, except that the officers had feathers in their caps—to let you know they were officers. I used to put them all into the fire to see them melt, and the officers had the privilege of going last. I'm very much in the position of the officers—exactly like lots of other fellows, except that my title is my feather in the cap. It's all been very jolly so far, but I know that I'm reserved to be—melted.

MAUR. Wonder of wonders! After sojourning three years on the dull earth amongst the mortals whose inheritance is work and anxiety, I return for an instant to the Olympus of fashion, and find that cares and doubts have dared to scale that glittering height and fasten themselves on Bayard Beaucourt.

SIR B. That's sarcasm, Maurice—always a failing of yours. (*a pause*) Eh? well, forward whilst the breeze lasts. *Vive l'amour! vive la guerre!*

MAUR. *L'amour ne va pas bien.* Is not that what you mean?

SIR B. I wish I were in your place, Maurice. What is it that you have lost, your fortune? You have chosen a profession in which you must succeed sooner or later. Now, I have a taste for acting, but I can't act—you can. You work hard—you have a career before you, while I am a mere superior lacquey, a fan-bearer, an escort to a most haughty, capricious, unreasonable—bah!

MAUR. Ah, I thought that was it. I had that fever very badly when I lost my money.

SIR B. I remember; but I was abroad at the time, you know. I never saw the girl; I even forget—yes, what was her name?

MAUR. Um!—I—I forget too.

SIR B. (*looking at him*) That's a lie, Maurice! (*a pause*) And are you cured?

MAUR. I think so. The fairy who held me spell-bound could not, of course, being a well-bred and properly-trained fairy, continue to take any interest in me when I was almost a beggar, and going on the stage for a living; and since I left Olympus I haven't seen the divinity.

SIR B. Ah, then you're not cured. If I could tear myself away I should think I had got over it. Necessity drove you away, but if chance were to bring you and the fairy together again you would be as bad as ever.

MAUR. I doubt it. My divinity may be married for aught I know. Three years is a long time. And if not, the idea of my thinking of her would be too ridiculous—I, a poor devil of an actor, who have been drudging for three years in the provinces, and having at last got a London engagement, the piece turns out a failure. Truly, as you say, I have a career before me, but I doubt whether a divinity would care to share it—a divinity moreover, to whom a house in Mayfair, a stall at the Opera, and a horse in the Row are as matters of course.

SIR B. Nothing to the point. You would have the fever worse than before, because without hope—

The desire of the moth for the star;
Of the night, for the morrow;
The devotion to something afar——

MAUR. (*laughing*) Oh, you must be very bad if you quote Shelley. I should like to see the divinity—where dwells she?

SIR B. Here.

MAUR. Here? And perchance when I threw myself carelessly on this couch the impress of her fairy form yet lingered on the cushions.

SIR B. Don't be a fool, Maurice!

MAUR. My dear old fellow, I don't know why I'm in spirits; I'm sure I've little reason to be so; I think it must be seeing you. Of all my friends in the old times, you are the only one of whom I should have been glad to meet. When I stopped you last week, I knew that from you at least I need not fear a patronising tone or an affected air of pity for my mode of life.

SIR B. You gave us little chance of patronising or pitying you. You disappeared as if the earth had swallowed you up—cut off every clue to your whereabouts, changed your name, and vanished utterly.

MAUR. And would again, yet—Change the subject, Bayard. Sir Harold, I think you said, is a bachelor; is your divinity his niece?

SIR B. His ward. Her father died about a year back.

MAUR. Have you known them long?

SIR B. Only this season.

Enter SERVANT, L., with a letter on a salver.

SERVANT. (*handing it to SIR BAYARD*) Just brought, Sir Bayard, from your rooms by your man.

SIR B. (*after reading it*) How annoying! (*to SERVANT*) Call a hansom, will you, and tell Martin he need not wait.

Exit SERVANT.

MAURICE, my mother is in town, and has sent word that she wishes to speak to me. She is at my rooms; she says she will not keep me five minutes. Would you mind waiting here? I shall be back in less than a quarter-of-an-hour.

MAUR. I don't mind waiting in the least, but isn't it rather a peculiar position for me to be left alone in a house, with not one of whose inhabitants I have the slightest acquaintance? If they return——

SIR B. Oh, they won't return before me. Sir Harold is safe for an hour when he is with Mrs. Dashway; and I'll leave word downstairs. I'll be with you again in a twinkling.

Exit, quickly, L.

MAUR. I don't recollect that I said I would wait. Deuced awkward for me if some of them come back. Dear old Bayard, just the same as ever, headlong, impetuous, generous, soft-hearted. (*taking up a newspaper*) Hum! Royal Grandcrash Theatre—great success. Bah! (*takes up a book*)

Enter MURIEL HEPBURN, R., in bonnet, &c.

MURIEL. (*aside*) Mr. Potter and Diana are having a Parliamentary flirtation in the library. I think I should send for the Serjeant-at-arms. And I have to talk to this actor; I've forgotten his name. I wish, if Sir Bayard brings men here, that he wouldn't run away and leave them. (*aloud and coming down*) I understand that Sir Bayard——

MAUR. (*turning and dropping the book*) Heavens! Muriel Hepburn!

MURIEL. Maurice Hamilton!

MAUR. (*after a pause*) This is an unexpected meeting.

MURIEL. Very unexpected. (*another pause*)

MAUR. Ahem!

MURIEL. You said——

MAUR. I said—I said—oh, ah! yes—I said—Won't you sit down?

MURIEL. Are you the actor who, we understood, would accompany Sir Bayard to day?

MAUR. I am.

MURIEL. I was unaware that you had gone on the stage.

MAUR. You were ignorant of that as of all the other facts

of my life, since the loss of my fortune rendered me an object too insignificant for your notice.

MURIEL. If, Mr. Hamilton——

MAUR. Pardon me—I have dropped that name with all the associations it recalls. Oblige me, in the few days during which you will shortly have to tolerate my presence near you, by knowing me only as Mr. Lawley.

MURIEL. You have changed your name, I presume, because you are ashamed of the profession you have adopted.

MAUR. No—a hundred times, no! I glory in it. I am devoted to it, and I rejoice to know that it is fast becoming beyond the power of cant and prejudice to keep its members from enjoying the position to which they are entitled. I changed my name because I could not bear the complacent patronage, the hateful compassion of those who had called themselves my friends—because——

MURIEL. Pray Mr.—Mr. Lawley, spare me a rehearsal of your stage manner now, I shall doubtless see enough of it next week, that is, if you still intend to come to Sir Harold's.

MAUR. And why should my intention have changed?

MURIEL. If you have no delicacy of feeling——

MAUR. Oh, I understand. Because I was once engaged to you, and was thrown over when I became poor with as little ceremony as you would use in throwing away an old glove, I am now to have “delicacy of feeling,” and keep aloof from you. But you do me too much honour. I am not your equal; I am a poor actor, and after three years may be considered a stranger to you, for you were never engaged to *me*. When you consented to become my wife, I thought it was pure affection; and when I lost all my money at one blow, I found it was pure affection for the money I had lost. It was my property to which you were engaged.

MURIEL. (*rising and walking haughtily away*) We will close the conversation if you please, sir.

Enter SIR BAYARD, L.

SIR B. All right, Maurice, I'm just a neck ahead of Sir Harold and Mrs. Dashway. (*sees* MURIEL) Miss Hepburn, I beg ten thousand pardons, I did not see you. Permit me to introduce to you my friend——

MURIEL. Mr. Lawley, as he pleases to call himself, and I have met before.

MAURICE. But, I certainly—and I believe Miss Hepburn also—am anxious to forget that we have done so.

MURIEL. Decidedly. You will oblige me, Sir Bayard, by not again referring to the fact.

SIR B. (*bowing*) As you wish. (*aside*) But what in the world is the matter? They look as if they'd been fighting.

Enter SIR HAROLD, MRS. DASHWAY, and TRUCULENT, L., POTTER and MISS TREFUSIS, R., *all talking*.

SIR H. (*shaking hands with* SIR BAYARD) Oh, here he is at last! Our master of the revels, organizer, director, stage-manager——

SIR B. No, not the last. Allow me to introduce to you and the other members present of our company, our stage-manager, Mr. Lawley. (POTTER, TRUCULENT and MISS TREFUSIS *bow stiffly*)

SIR H. (*shaking hands*) We shall be delighted to see you at Almahurst, Mr. Lawley.

MRS. D. (*shaking hands*) Oh, we mean to have glorious fun. And you'll let me do just as I like, won't you?

(POTTER *button-holes* MAURICE and *leads him up, talking*—
SIR BAYARD and MURIEL *talking on couch*, R.—SIR HAROLD and MRS. DASHWAY, C.—TRUCULENT and MISS TREFUSIS, L.)

MISS T. (*aside to* TRUCULENT) Mr. Truculent, that dreadful woman, you alone seem to share my doubts about her.

MRS. D. Oh, I mean to do great execution next week!

MISS T. (*to* TRUCULENT) Mr. Truculent, you hear?

TRUC. Madam, I hear.

MRS. D. I shall appear as Lady Macbeth. Mr. Truculent, don't you dare to presume to say I'm not the greatest Lady Macbeth since Mrs. Siddons.

TRUC. You'll be the character to the life, Mrs. Dashway. (*aside*) With this slight difference, Lady Macbeth proposed to her husband to kill; she kills her husband to be proposed to.

MRS. D. And then I want something grand, classic, terrible—Remorse, Revenge, the Furies and Despair.

POTTER. (*coming quickly down*) I have it—Clytemnestra, Æschylus, Agamemnon.

SIR H. (*aside*) Æschylus again! He's got a half-crown translation in his pocket.

MISS T. (*aside to* TRUCULENT) Mr. Truculent, it is Fate.

MRS. D. But what did Clytemnestra do? I am so stupid, I forget. Tell me, Mr. Potter.

POTTER. Ahem! You may recollect, Mrs. Dashway, that after the fall of Troy, as described by Æneas to Dido, and the dispersion of the chiefs——

MRS. D. Oh! but I don't want an oration, Mr. Potter. I heard you give one of those in the House the other night

when I was in that barred Zoological-Gardens—cage sort of place, into which you thrust us there.

TRUC. One of the few sensible things the House of Commons has done—put the women where they can neither be seen nor heard.

SIR B. } Shame! Shame!
SIR H. }

MRS. D. Ah! Mr. Truculent, *you* shall tell me. *What* did Clytemnestra do?

TRUC. She murdered her husband, Mrs. Dashway.

MRS. D. (*clapping her hands*) Oh, how delightful!

MISS T. (*aside*) Oh the wretch!

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

REHEARSING.

SCENE.—*The Library at Almahurst. Doors R. and L.; at back an arch with curtains drawn across the opening.*

MRS. DASHWAY, SIR HAROLD, and TRUCULENT *in an arm chair, reading.*

MRS. D. Yes—it's very well to laugh, Sir Harold, and say "Come out for a ride;" but matters are becoming serious. I am willing to take any part in anything, if they will only decide upon some one play; but it is ridiculous that each of us should be learning a part out of a different piece and spouting it about the house. I am willing to sacrifice myself, though I brought down a translation of "Agamemnon," and have studied Clytemnestra, and Mr. Lawley says I really seem wonderfully at home in it.

TRUC. (*aside*) No wonder! Practically her fourth appearance.

MRS. D. But both your sister and Muriel positively decline to play Cassandra, and Mr. Potter won't undertake the Chorus, though I'm sure it's quite in his line; and he strides about reciting—

"Friends and countrymen, lend me your ears."

SIR H. A very superfluous petition on his part. Why he should wish to borrow either ears or tongue I don't know!

MRS. D. The end of it will be that we shall come down to

some wretched readings. Even Mr. Lawley, though he is most polite and attentive, appears to have something on his mind; for when we were rehearsing a scene in "Macbeth," yesterday, and I said—

"Had he not resembled my father as he slept,
I would have done it"—

He burst out—

"Ha! banishment? Be merciful, say—death!
For exile hath more terror in his look,
Much more than death: do not say—banishment;
'Tis torture, and not mercy! Heaven is here,
Where Juliet lives; and every cat, and dog,
And little mouse, every unworthy thing
Live here in heaven, and may look on her;
But Romeo may not."

And then he stopped and blushed up to the eyes. And as for Sir Bayard and Muriel, they seem to want to play the "Lady of Lyons," with all the parts except Claude Melnotte and Pauline omitted by particular desire. I despair!—I give it up!

SIR H. Don't despair yet. I've summoned a Council of War to meet here at one o'clock and decide whether we advance or retreat. Till then you can do nothing. You promised to ride with me this morning, and we have not much time left.

MRS. D. (*sighing*) Oh, well. I'll go and get ready. (*suddenly*) Stay—an idea! (*takes half a dozen chairs and ranges them in a semi-circle in the middle of the room*) All of them will be sure to stroll in here sometime during the morning. Those chairs are suggestive of an audience.

TRUC. (*aside*) More suggestive of the actors—considerably wooden.

MRS. D. The thought of an audience may fire their ambition. (*she goes up and stands by the arch—SIR HAROLD laughs and sits on one of the chairs*) They may see as I see now, each chair occupied by an appreciative phantom.

SIR H. (*jumping up*) By Jove! I hope not.

MRS. D. Who with a spectral opera glass follows me as I say the famous speech in which Clytemnestra describes the beacon fires that tell her Troy has fallen and Agamemnon is returning—and you know that is the subject of the act-drop they are coming to put up this morning; I roughly designed it myself, and stood for the figure of Clytemnestra. I am on the palace roof of Agamemnon, with my back hair down (though I think that's wrong), and as many bad passions on

my face as could be crowded in, and I am supposed to be saying :—

“ First Ida to the steep
Of Lemnos. Athos’ sacred height received
The mighty splendour; from the surging back
Of th’ Hellespont the vig’rous blaze held on
Its smiling way, and like the orient sun”——

The rest to-morrow.

Exit quickly, R.

Enter MAURICE, L.

SIR H. Oh, Lawley, Mrs. Dashway has just been lamenting that the theatricals are making such small progress.

MAUR. They are making none, Sir Harold, and it is on that point I wish to speak to you. We have had that curtain and the little stage beyond put up, and Mrs. Dashway has decreed that we shall be known under the style and title of the “Gentle Players,” but beyond that absolutely nothing has been done. Stay! I see some sanguine individual has been arranging a few chairs as if for an audience.

SIR H. (*laughing*) Mrs. Dashway again—a whim of hers—leave them as they are.

MAUR. My post is a sinecure, and unless they begin soon in earnest, I shall feel that I have no excuse for prolonging my stay here.

SIR H. Pooh, pooh! most happy to see you for your own sake, most happy. Moreover, I have called a Council of War to meet here at one o’clock, and decide whether they mean to show fight. And really it is of little importance whether the theatricals come off or not, as they are only to amuse the people in the house. But you mustn’t run away; there is the ball to-morrow, and afterwards——

MAUR. If that be the only reason for my remaining, Sir Harold, I must really decline, and indeed, I was about to ask you to excuse me if I left at once.

SIR H. Nonsense, sir! Decline—leave at once! You will stay here till you get marching orders from me—I say I *like* you. You’re not a soldier, unfortunately, though you deserve to be one, and that’s the highest praise I can give to any man. I shall take care you are not idle too long. You’ll have the route from me when I think you’ve been long enough in barracks. Have you seen any of your company lately?

MAUR. Mr. Potter is in the shrubbery rehearsing in peace, “I come to bury Cæsar, not to praise him.”

TRUC. Just what the audience will want to do to Potter.

SIR H. Ah, Truculent, here’s our stage-manager trying to desert.

TRUC. (*rising and coming down*) Very foolish of him, as he's nothing to do, and gets his rations regularly.

SIR H. How shall we punish him?

TRUC. Have Potter in to make him a speech, with a doctor standing by, of course, with a stop-watch in his hand to see that the culprit is not punished beyond his powers of endurance.

SIR H. No, no—that's too horrible!

Enter SERVANT, R.

SERVANT. Mrs. Dashway is ready, Sir Harold. *Exit.*

SIR H. I'd sooner have fifty lashes with the cat. I'll leave him to you and let him hear wholesome truths. (*crossing, R.*) Remember, here—one o'clock—sharp! *Exit, R.*

TRUC. (*sitting down*) Mr. Lawley, will you listen to me for a short time?

MAUR. Will it be to hear what Sir Harold calls wholesome truths about myself as an actor, from you as a critic?

TRUC. No, sir, it will be to hear wholesome advice from me as a middle-aged man to you as a young fool. Ah, now you're angry. None of you young men can keep your tempers. If it were really true that you wanted to desert just now, you were very wise.

MAUR. It is refreshing to hear Mr Truculent commend anything, even in private; for malicious people have said that he cannot praise, even if he would.

TRUC. Don't try to be sarcastic, young gentleman, and attend to me. If you wish for a valid and irresistible excuse to leave here, I can give it you. The manager of a first-class London theatre has asked me if I can recommend him an actor for a difficult and rather peculiar part in an important piece to be produced very shortly. It's a great, an enormous responsibility, but say the word and you shall have the engagement.

MAUR. (*after a pause*) Mr. Truculent, during the three years I have knocked about the world as an actor, I fear I have become very sceptical; but I must really ask you, do you offer me this solely upon my merits?

TRUC. (*confused*) Why, of course I think you could play the part, that is as well—for—for—in fact I consider you a very promising actor.

MAUR. (*laughing*) In short it's a dramatic "job." Promise is not performance. I think I can guess the theatre, the piece, and the part. Of course I believe I can play it, and it certainly would be an immense chance for me; but, before I either accept or refuse, I must know why you wish to get me away from here.

TRUC. You *will* have it.

MAUR. I will have it.

TRUC. You and Sir Bayard are both over head and ears in love with Miss Hepburn.

MAUR. (*quickly*) How do you know that?

TRUC. It doesn't require the acuteness of a detective to find it out. Anyone who only during last evening noticed the way in which you both followed her about with your eyes when she moved, and looked at her when she talked, could discover it; and when she addressed a simple question to you you grew quite pale. (*a pause—MAURICE is silent*) Now, Mr. Lawley, actors frequently change their names, and the one which half left Miss Hepburn's lips last night when she spoke to you, certainly did not begin with L. You may have known her in bygone days; it's no business of mine; but it's quite clear you should leave Almahurst as soon as possible.

MAUR. Do you say this out of regard for my peace of mind or Bayard's?

TRUC. Both; but especially out of regard for Sir Bayard. Two years ago he laid me under very great obligation to him; he has never mentioned the circumstance since—it isn't his way—neither have I—it isn't mine—but I don't forget it.

MAUR. And you ask me to retire from the field simply because you have reason to be grateful to Bayard.

TRUC. (*surprised*) You are not such a maniac as to suppose Miss Hepburn would marry you—you, an actor, out of an engagement?

MAUR. If there be no danger of her marrying me there is none in my remaining.

TRUC. Have you never heard of a girl loving one man and marrying another? If you and Sir Bayard were equal in point of position I shouldn't interfere; as it is, you can't have the girl yourself, and by staying here you may make both her and Sir Bayard miserable: for I think she would be inclined to prefer you, but that by doing so she would be qualifying herself in the eyes of the world for admission into a lunatic asylum.

MAUR. (*eagerly*) Can it be? No, no—her tone to me—her manner.

TRUC. You ought to know by this time that a woman's manner is not an infallible weathercock to show which way her temper sets. I tell you, I think, if you were as rich as Sir Bayard, Miss Hepburn would have *you*. I do no harm in saying so, because you're not likely to be as rich as he is, and she'll like him very well in time.

MAUR. (*shaking him by the hand*) Mr. Truculent, you've given me new life.

TRUC. Hallo, what's in the wind now?

MAUR. (*striding excitedly up and down*) I'll tell you a story, Mr. Truculent.

TRUC. (*aside*) He's confoundedly cheerful all on a sudden.

MAUR. My father was the younger of two brothers. He was intended for the church and a fat family living. The prospect did not please him—he left college and went into trade. His father and brother quarrelled with him utterly, and never saw him again; but he was astonishingly fortunate at first in business, and had made a large fortune while still a young man. Then the luck turned; he sustained loss after loss in rapid succession, and when he died a few months after my mother, I, an only child, found myself alone on the world, and to my great surprise—for he had told me nothing of reverses—almost a beggar. That is three years ago. Since that time I have been an actor, and till yesterday had no hopes but those connected with the profession I have followed. I heard then that my father's brother—whom I have never seen—has met with an accident so serious, that his life is despaired of. I heard also for the first time that his only son died a twelvemonth back, and, therefore, as the family estates are entailed, I, Maurice Lawley, the poor unknown actor, out of an engagement, may next week—to-morrow—in an hour, now for aught I know, be Maurice Hamilton, of Lort Park, etcetera, etcetera, very much at your service.

TRUC. (*dismayed*) Oh, the deuce!

MAUR. Though I have never seen my uncle, he has seen me. I was playing in Dublin one night; he happened to be in the house—was struck by the family likeness—made enquiries—and after some trouble succeeded in finding out who I was. He then wrote to me, insolently offering, if I would leave the stage, to advance a sum of money to enable me to start in business. For answer I sent him back his own letter. (*pause*) So you were right in thinking the name which nearly escaped Miss Hepburn did not begin with L, and in guessing that we had known each other before. I was once engaged to her.

TRUC. (*aside*) Worse and worse!

MAUR. The engagement was broken off, and for three years I heard nothing of her—I did not even know that General Hepburn was dead until chance brought me the other day to Sir Harold's house, and I found his daughter living there. In the excitement of our unexpected meeting, and irritated by what I thought her contemptuous manner, I allowed myself to speak to her in a way that I deeply regret. I did not know then how I still loved her. I know it now—I have felt it more and more every day that I have been here; but I feared I had offended her too deeply to dare to hope for pardon, and had it not been for you I should have gone away without asking for

it. But now—by Jove, I haven't felt so hopeful or light-hearted for years.

TRUC. And but for what I have said you would have left here soon, though you knew you were likely to come into this fortune?

MAUR. Yes; this evening.

TRUC. Then I'm a confounded fool, and I wish my tongue had been cut out.

MAUR. But you declared that if Bayard and I were equal in point of position, you wouldn't interfere—that is, you would give us both fair play.

TRUC. (*bursting out*) Oh, yes, I dare say I said so; but I didn't mean it. I dare say I said you might have fair play; but that was when I thought there was no danger of your getting it. I dare say I said Miss Hepburn liked you; but that was when I thought you were a beggar, and likely to remain so. I didn't want you, but Sir Bayard to have her, for I know he'll be wretched if he doesn't. How the deuce was I to know that your confounded uncle had broken his neck? I hope he'll live, live to a green old age—a green old age, sir; and if I had the money, I'd send down a dozen physicians to help him to spite you by recovering. I consider I've been humbugged—humbugged, sir, and I wish I'd been smothered before I opened my lips upon the subject!

Exit, L.

MAUR. (*laughing*) How angry he is at having done me a service. But has he? I fear I have been rushing at conclusions. Three minutes ago my path seemed clear before me; but now the difficulties, that have been lying in ambush, start up on every side. I should speak to her at once, but how can I when I am still poor, and how can I ask her to be my wife provided my uncle dies—that is, provided I woo her as Aladdin wooed his Princess? He sent numerous costly presents to prove his worth and propitiate papa before he dared to appear in person; and I must offer mine a place in the country, a house in Town, position, wealth, settlements—myself, the last and least of all. No. I cannot ask her now; the accounts of my uncle's condition may have been exaggerated, he may recover. It's rather a cold-blooded way to talk, but you can't be very sorry for a man you've never seen. And yet every moment is precious. She may accept Bayard. There again—my rival is my oldest friend. (*savagely*) Confound my position! What a fool I was just now! (*goes up to the arch*) Hallo! why what the deuce—they've made the curtains to draw from this side—the idiots! (*pulls a cord—the curtains draw back and show the other half of the room fitted up as a little stage*) We must alter this at once—that is, if we are really to do anything. (*steps across to the stage*) Ha! I feel better, better, the instant I am

over the imaginary line of the footlights, out of the "world of d—d realities" and into "Stage-Land." This is my true element after all; and I want to leave it for a humdrum, gig-keeping, respectable life. Fool!

Enter MURIEL, L., with a book in her hand—MAURICE comes down.

MURIEL. No one here—what a relief. (*sees MAURICE*) Oh! Mr. Lawley, I thought I was alone.

MAUR. And possibly wish to be so.

MURIEL. No, I arranged to meet Sir Bayard here to rehearse at this time.

MAUR. Then one of you must have mistaken the time, for Bayard has gone round to the stables to look after one of his horses.

MURIEL. How annoying! I thought we were sure of a quiet half-hour here, as almost every one is out. Before Sir Bayard comes back the place will be invaded again; for it seems to have become a sort of common room, and everybody who happens to be bored lounges into it to find some one else to be miserable with. Who put those chairs in that way?

MAUR. Some freak of Mrs. Dashway's. I will send Bayard here, if you will first spare me five minutes' conversation.

MURIEL. (*coldly*) I cannot think of any subject upon which it is either necessary or desirable that we should converse, Mr. Hamilton—pardon me, if I address you by your own name, as we are by ourselves. I find it sufficiently hard to keep up the deception in public.

MAUR. (*ironically*) Women being so entirely unaccustomed to countenance social shams and polite fables, I can understand your difficulty.

MURIEL. (*with spirit*) Mr. Hamilton, if you wish me to listen to a repetition of the criticism of my conduct, with which you favoured me on our first meeting, I must decline to remain.

MAUR. On the contrary, I wish to apologize for my rudeness then—to ask your forgiveness of it.

MURIEL. It is already forgotten.

MAUR. Too readily I fear—too easily forgotten—as you forget the past. When I suddenly saw you the rush of memories was so strong, my longing remembrance of the dear old days so keen that in struggling to repress it I scarcely knew what I said. I thought of the morning when I went to tell your father that instead of having inherited a fortune I was almost a beggar, and of the absolute terror and loathing with which he ordered me never to enter his house again, as if I had committed some monstrous crime.

MURIEL. (*passionately*) Why do you recall all this? You know that my father's ruling passion was his terror of poverty. You know that his life was one long struggle to keep up appearances before his rich relations, from whom he was too proud to ask assistance. Almost his last words expressed to me was, that I should never marry a poor man. Why cannot you accept the past; it is irrevocable? What good can it do either of us to whimper for the tender grace of a day that is dead? The past has been as bitter to me as to you—(MAURICE *makes an impatient movement*) for I loved you then. I hoped, indeed, at first, that with your talents you would soon reach a position in which I might again be permitted to think of you as my husband, and—and I suffered very much when you disappeared, and it was supposed that you——

MAUR. Had fallen so low you would say. And if, now that you are free to choose for yourself, I were to ask you to share my fortunes—to be an actor's wife, you would think me a madman.

MURIEL. (*coldly*) I am glad you have yourself anticipated the only possible answer to such a question.

MAUR. Of course. In our modern tournaments no one has a chance against the champion who tilts with a golden lance, whose crest is a cheque book, and his motto, "I draw freely." The disinherited knight finds small favour in the ladies' eyes in these days. He rides round the lists, but not one of them will accept his homage, or beg him to break a lance in her honour. Sound trumpets, a Conqueror's March! Place for the Knight of the Banker's Balance. Crowd round him, modest and retiring damsels, suitors for his victorious smiles!

Happy, happy, happy pair,
None but the rich,
None but the rich,
None but the rich
Deserve the fair.

Enter SIR BAYARD, quickly.

SIR B. A thousand apologies, Miss Hepburn, I fear I have kept you waiting.

MURIEL. More, you have just missed a great intellectual treat. Mr. Lawley has been rehearsing; some passage from an old melodrama, I should think; you would have been delighted. For myself I do not admire his herioc style, but he may be very good in low comedy.

SIR B. (*aside*) Another row. (*aloud*) Dear me, what's the matter with those chairs?

MAUR. (*crossing, R.*) An idea of Mrs. Dashway's—don't disturb them.

SIR B. Won't you stop and give us a hint or two, Maurice?

MAUR. No, thank you; Miss Hepburn doesn't admire my heroic style. I'll give her an opportunity of seeing me in low comedy, and get up an old farce in special compliment to her.

SIR B. What farce?

MAUR. "Woman's the Deuce."

Exit, R.

SIR B. (*angrily*) What does he mean by that?

MURIEL. Really, Sir Bayard, I think it is of very little importance what he means; he has, I suppose, like so many other people, mistaken impertinence for wit.

SIR B. But he has no right to do anything of the sort where you are concerned. By Jove, if I thought——

MURIEL. Please do not pursue the subject.

SIR B. But——

MURIEL. Sir Bayard, you have told me often—so often that I am rather tired of hearing it—that my slightest wish is law to you. It seems, however, that this was a mere form of speech.

SIR B. I obey, O Queen.

MURIEL. Good, Subject. And now, what is to be done about these theatricals?

SIR B. Why, Sir Harold has summoned a council of war to meet here at one, with military punctuality. He says we are to decide then whether we mean to advance or retreat, and if we resolve on the former to do so at once in close order, and not straggling like a lot of camp followers.

Enter POTTER, L., with a book in his hand, he advances slowly without seeing SIR BAYARD and MURIEL.

SIR B. (*aside*) Here's one of the camp followers.

MURIEL. (*aside to SIR BAYARD*) No—no—part of the artillery—a large bore.

SIR B. (*aside to MURIEL*) Listen—the old humbug pretends not to see us.

POTTER. (*declaiming*) "I come not, friends, to steal away your hearts."

MURIEL. (*aside to SIR BAYARD*) That's very true.

POTTER. "I am no orator as Brutus is."

SIR B. (*aside to MURIEL*) If he is, Brutus has been doosed overrated. (*aloud*) Ahem!

POTTER. Oh, Sir Bayard! Miss Hepburn—really. (*comes down*) I was so rapt in my study of the immortal Bard that I had not even noticed that I had entered the house from the garden.

SIR B. (*aside*) Oh!

MURIEL. How curious, a sort of Shaksperian somnambulism.

SIR B. May I ask, Mr. Potter, why you are studying that

speech? You don't suppose we are going to play Julius Cæsar, do you?

POTTER. Oh, no, no! But I thought it might be useful if I were to recite it in one of the intervals.

SIR B. A capital idea, when all the people are talking.

POTTER. Sir Bayard!

SIR B. I mean, of course, to fix their attention.

POTTER. Oh, yes, yes! And if at this meeting at one o'clock we should determine not to go on with the theatricals, it would come in so admirably for a reading, to which we might invite the humbler classes of the vicinity; for I hold, Sir Bayard, that one of the paramount duties which we of the higher ranks of society have to discharge, is to endeavour to share with our inferiors those pleasures of literature which our culture enables us to appreciate. Is it not better that a man should be listening to a passage from this glorious book, than sitting in a public house?

SIR B. (*suppressing a yawn*) I suppose it's a matter of taste.

MURIEL. (*aside to SIR BAYARD*) Can't you have a bad fit of coughing?

POTTER. Of taste, of taste, Sir Bayard! But if his taste be so depraved as to make him prefer the public house, we must reform his taste—we must elevate his taste—we must—(*SIR BAYARD holds his handkerchief to his mouth and coughs violently*) Dear me, what a distressing cough. Allow me—(*taking a small box from his pocket*) to offer you one of my lozenges—the "Potter Lozenge," composed and dedicated expressly to me by a chemist, who is one of my supporters in the constituency I have the honour to represent. (*SIR BAYARD takes a lozenge*)

MURIEL. (*aside to SIR BAYARD*) Don't stop.

POTTER. (*looking at his watch*) Dear me. Twenty minutes to one! The meeting is in twenty minutes, and I promised to recite this to Miss Trefusis before lunch. (*going up, L.*) Will you excuse me?

SIR B. With pleasure. (*aside*) And the longer you stop away the better.

POTTER. (*listening*) Eh?

SIR B. (*aside*) By Jove, he's heard! (*aloud*) Er—yes—the better Miss Trefusis will be pleased.

POTTER. (*chuckling*) Oh!

Enter MISS TREFUSIS.

Ah, here is Miss Trefusis; how fortunate.

MURIEL. (*aside to SIR BAYARD*) No peace for us now. Let us go down to the shrubbery. We can get through one scene there before the meeting. (*they go up quickly, L.*)

MISS T. Why, Muriel! am I a monster—a Medusa, that you should rush away the instant I come into the room?

SIR B. Oh, Miss Trefusis! you know we are to arrive at a momentous decision at one o'clock. We're going to consult an oracle as to the course we shall take. *Exeunt.*

MISS T. (*aside*) Consult an oracle! Consult a flirtation! (*aloud*) Well, Mr. Potter, I thought you had forgotten me.

POTTER. To forget you, Miss Trefusis, would to me be as impossible as to forget the Speaker's chair; both objects——

MISS T. Objects, Mr. Potter.

POTTER. Objects of my humble veneration. By the way, you very kindly asked me yesterday if I could not remain here a little longer than I originally fixed. I have now my "Visiting and Memoria-Technica Book," (*takes out a small book*) endorsed, you see, and arranged on a systematic principle. I look under T in the index, and find "Trefusis—Sir Harold, K.C.B., and Miss, Almahurst, Berkshire, and Grosvenor Street, London," page 40. I turn to page 40, and find there the date of my engagement to you, followed by the memorandum S, page 61; looking again to the index I see that this is "Scaleswayte, Lord Eaglescrest, Scotland, and Park Lane, London," and on page 61 are the dates of my engagement to him. (*putting up the book*) I am due, Miss Trefusis, very shortly at Eaglescrest, but I shall venture to take one or two of Scaleswayte's days and add them to yours.

MISS T. Oh, thank you, Mr. Potter! so happy to have you here. And now, have you considered the other subject on which I spoke to you?

POTTER. Mrs. Dashway?

MISS T. Mrs. Dashway!

POTTER. I have considered Mrs. Dashway from every point of view.

MISS T. And is it not horrible that any woman should have had three husbands?

POTTER. I certainly hold, as an earnest student of Political Economy, and the laws of supply and demand, that as the present supply of marriageable men is so greatly less than the demand for them by women, it is much to be deplored that Mrs. Dashway should have had at least three times her fair share of the supply.

MISS T. And that they are all dead.

POTTER. There again I consider that Mrs. Dashway has raised the rate of mortality amongst husbands to an excessive height.

MISS T. She will raise it higher still. My brother will be her next victim.

POTTER. Sir Harold!

MISS T. She will marry him unless I can prevent her, Mr. Potter.

POTTER. Excuse me—may I suggest that we should converse in the other room—the stage, in fact. No one will be likely to interrupt us there, while here people are perpetually running in and out. Neither does talking in this room much disturb you. From the further end you can hear the sound of voices, but nothing more. I was studying there myself this morning. *(they go up)*

MISS T. Who has arranged those chairs in that ridiculous style?

POTTER. Ha, ha! I don't know. Shall I move them?

MISS T. No, not worth while. *They go under the arch.*

Enter TRUCULENT, with a letter and a newspaper—he puts the newspaper on a table and comes down, looking at the letter.

TRUC. What unlucky chance made the fellow give me this? Maurice Hamilton, Esquire. Servant knows no such name in the house—can't find Sir Harold, appeals to me—I undertake to deliver it, and—*(pause)* Black-border—postmark, Irish—addressed to care of a dramatic agent—old address scratched out, and re-directed here—*(pause)* Suppose his uncle is dead! Ah! the "Times." *(looks at the paper)* He is—it's here! Terence Hamilton, Lort Park, Ireland—effects of a fall from his horse. That must be the man! *(a pause—he walks up and down)* If he knows this now, Bayard's chance is gone—and I owe him so much. If I were to delay this letter—but that would be roguery! Pshaw, no it wouldn't—what the post-office does every day of the year. *(suddenly)* I'll do it for once!—tell Bayard to propose instantly; and when he's accepted, and everyone knows it, Mr. Hamilton can have his letter. Stay, I must hide the "Times' Supplement" as well. *(puts the letter and the paper in his pocket—MRS. DASHWAY is heard laughing without, R.—starting)* What's that? Pshaw, what a fool I am!

Enter MRS. DASHWAY in a riding habit, and SIR HAROLD.

MRS. D. Something like a gallop, Sir Harold! and we've still a few minutes to spare.

SIR H. I haven't enjoyed anything so much since Balaklava! Ah, Truculent, you're punctual.

TRUC. Like Nelson, I believe in being a quarter of an hour before time in my appointments.

MRS. D. And you expect every man to do his duty except yourself, and you stand by and find fault with the way the others do theirs.

SIR H. I say, Truculent, I'm as hungry as a hunter!—I

want my lunch! Would you—excuse me—mind beating up two or three of the members of the Council of War, and sending them here? Let us get the business settled once for all. Sir Bayard and Muriel are spooning down by the shrubbery, and Lawley's in the billiard room, I think. (TRUCULENT *nods and goes to door, L.*)

MRS. D. Yes, I will recall them to a sense of their duty. We'll cross the frontier—that is the footlights—and venture into "Stage Land," as Mr. Lawley calls it. I will re-animate their drooping hearts by my example.

"Infirm of purpose, give me the daggers!"

TRUC. They couldn't be in better hands, Mrs. Dashway.

Exit, L.

MRS. D. Ha, ha, ha! Wasn't that like Truculent. I couldn't resist hitting at him just now. (*dropping her voice a little*) Oh, after all I've forgotten what I most particularly wanted to tell you. I have always known that your sister was not fond of me, but—ha, ha, ha! last night my maid told me that Miss Hepburn's maid had been told by your sister's maid that Miss Trefusis thinks I am a remorseless wretch—a Borgia, a Brinvilliers—who would not scruple to poison you all with aqua tofana, by which means I probably disposed of my husbands; whereas I was married to Mr. Danvers for money, and he died of the gout; I married Mr. Darling for position, and he was taken off by typhus fever; and I married Mr. Dashway—for no particular reason, except that he asked me—and he was killed in the hunting field. Very uncharitable of Miss Trefusis. Mr. Potter might have been her third.

SIR H. Potter! Do you suppose there is anything between her and Potter?

MRS. D. Do I suppose—why it's all but settled!

SIR H. Settled! By all the regulations of the service I'll have him out. I'll——

Enter SIR BAYARD and MURIEL, followed by TRUCULENT and MAURICE, L.

TRUC. Here are three of the Council, Sir Harold! (SIR BAYARD and MURIEL talk to SIR HAROLD and MRS. DASHWAY—MAURICE, L., takes up the "Times")

MAUR. No Supplement?

TRUC. Oh, ah!—I—I think I must have taken the Supplement to my room—by—by mistake.

MAUR. Did you read it? Would you have noticed if my uncle——

TRUC. Oh, I should have noticed that, indeed—I—I looked particularly.

MAUR. And was there nothing?

TRUC. N—no—nothing.

MAUR. (*crossing, R.—aside*) Heigho!

TRUC. (*aside*) That letter begins to feel like a burning coal in my pocket.

MRS. D. (R.) Mr. Lawley, have you noticed that the curtain is made to draw from this side?

MAUR. (*going up*) I noticed it a short time ago, it must be altered.

SIR H. If you mean to do anything.

TRUC. (*going up, L.*) Mean to do anything—flat heresy, Sir Harold. (*aside to SIR HAROLD*) But where is Potter? The theatricals without him!

SIR H. (*aside*) Oh, damn the theatricals!

TRUC. (*aside*) Don't anticipate their fate.

MRS. D. Mean to do anything? Of course! The Gentle Players are like those fellows at Waterloo:—"We die, but we don't surrender!" And when I have had an Act-Drop painted specially for the occasion! It should be hung by this time. A masterpiece! The audience will positively be sorry when it rises, and glad when it falls.

TRUC. (*aside*) Yes, that I'll be bound they will.

MRS. D. Sit down, and I'll show it to you. (*they sit, backs to AUDIENCE*—she goes up to the curtain*) Now, behold!

(*she pulls the cord—the curtains fly back—POTTER seen kneeling before MISS TREFUSIS, holding her hand—ALL wheel round their chairs in horror—MRS. DASHWAY stands laughing—Act Drop quick*)

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

NEW LOVES FOR OLD.

SCENE.—*Conservatory at Almahurst. Plants, &c., scattered about; fountain, C.; door at back, L., half open, through which can be seen the ball room beyond; door, R.*

DANCERS *seen passing in ball room*—TRUCULENT *discovered*.

TRUC. "Oh, what a tangled web we weave,
When first we practise to deceive!"

A hackneyed old quotation, but horribly true. Of course it's

* MAURICE.

SIR BAYARD.

TRUCULENT.

R.

MURIEL.

SIR HAROLD.

L.

only at first that we get in a mess. I don't suppose the Post Office has any twinges of conscience about delaying letters; but I, who usurped its functions for the first time yesterday in keeping back that letter of Hamilton's, feel deuced uncomfortable. I told Bayard to propose, giving him a strong hint that I had reason to believe success was certain, &c. He said at dinner yesterday that he'd do it in the evening; later on that he'd do it this morning; this morning that he'd do it after lunch; after lunch that he'd do it before dinner; at dinner that he'd do it to-night. If he doesn't do it to-night I can't hold out any longer. I can't tell him that for his sake I've committed a—ahem—I mean entered the Civil Service. When I saw Hamilton pounce upon the "Times" this morning, before anyone else could get at it, I thought I should have fainted; fortunately the death wasn't in again. (*a pause*) Well, I'm not the only unhappy wretch in the house. Poor Sir Harold has to grin and receive his guests, but his heart has been very sore, I fancy, since that scene in the library, and his sister's engagement to Potter. Potter! To think of that miserable windbag having caught a woman with so many cool thousands a year. (*a pause—he yawns*) How invaluable a reputation for being disagreeable is. Since I took refuge here from the sea of conversational drivel in which everyone is wading in the next room, no one has had the courage to come near the place, though it is so "deliciously cool." (MAURICE *stands at door, L., looking into the ball room*) Who's that? Hamilton, by Jove! I don't want *him*. (MAURICE *comes down*) Not dancing, Lawley?

MAUR. Not I. The County people don't approve of me. I suppose there lingers around me an aroma of gas and orange peel, which their aristocratic nostrils detect. (*sits down*) I saw Lady Glitterpinch just now. I was hand and glove with her son at College, and stayed with them several weeks in one vacation, when all her six daughters made love to me—of course in a correct and decorous manner—so I went and spoke to her. She stared at me stonily for two or three minutes, but seeing I didn't intend to move, she said, "Mr. Maurice Hamilton, I think? Dear me, I thought you had emigrated." Cordial, wasn't it?—ha, ha, ha! Then I asked her daughters to dance one after the other—they are all still unmarried—and with one consent they declared they were quite full—engaged up to the end of the evening. I noticed one of them drop her programme five minutes after, and I picked it up to see who were the favoured beings whose names appeared on it. I found one entry—"Number seven, quadrille—The Nil Desperandum—Mr. Platitude Potter." Happy Potter!

TRUC. Ha, ha, ha! Potter will ask every girl in the room

to dance whose father is a peer. He told his constituents the other day that he thought an hereditary aristocracy out of keeping with the liberal spirit of the age. So I suppose he does his best to thin its numbers by talking to death every member of it he knows.

MAUR. (*taking from his pocket a programme with a small pencil attached*) Here's the programme. I shall keep it to remind me of to-night, and to teach me a proper humility. By the way I *am* engaged for one dance. "Number thirteen, waltz—The Old Times—Miss Hepburn."

TRUC. Is that wise?

MAUR. Wise! I threw wisdom to the winds yesterday, after my conversation with you. If I were wise, should I have stayed here for to-night to see the glances of the dowagers in that room as they cautioned their daughters against me? I am still poor; the theatricals were given up after that fiasco in the library. I had no excuse for staying, but I stayed because I am more madly and hopelessly in love than ever. If I were wise, I should go this instant to my room, pack up and leave the house in half an hour.

TRUC. (*aside*) I wish to heaven he would!

MAUR. I have had no news of my uncle. He must be recovering; he is still in the prime of life; he will live many years and have other children.

TRUC. (*aside*) This is awful. (*aloud*) Don't take such a gloomy view of things. I dare—daresay he's only lingering—hope for the best.

MAUR. Ha, ha! What a cynical old villain you are, Truculent. You have expressed my own thoughts, which a paltry feeling of conventional delicacy prevented my uttering. Of course I hope that my uncle will die—why shouldn't I? I've never seen the man; he insulted me with an offer of money, and, if he lives, will never acknowledge or help me. Of course I hope he'll die. Yet I never should have had the courage to say as much in plain words as you did. Bravo! Truculent. *Vive la vérité.* (*goes up, L., and looks into the ball room*)

TRUC. (*aside*) I don't like this at all. He's already had more champagne than is good for him. I hope there won't be a scene.

MAUR. (*coming down*) Truculent! are you quite sure that yesterday when I did not see the "Times' Supplement," there was no notice in it of my uncle's death?

TRUC. (*agitated*) Oh, of course—yes—yes—I should have been certain to remark—(MAURICE *goes up again—aside*) This is too much. (*suddenly*) Where did I leave that letter and the Supplement! (*plunges his hand into his breast pocket, then with a sigh of relief*) Ah, I have them with me. I should like to confess, but I'm afraid.

MAUR. (*comes down*) You see that though my agent knows my real name and has my address here, there might be some delay before a letter would reach me. I should probably hear first through the "Times." (*slowly, after a pause*) If I were to hear now—now mind—that I was the owner of a fortune, I would give the bearer of the news a thousand pounds. A thousand—two—three—half a year's income, and hold myself still his debtor.

TRUC. (*aside, and wiping his face with his handkerchief*) I can't stand this! (*aloud*) I'm—I'm rather unwell. (*rising*) Excuse me—the heat!

MAUR. (*looking at him*) The heat—why, man, you're shivering. (*seizing him by the arm*) Truculent, I've found you out. You've kept something from me, and even now your craven soul quails at the prospect of discovery. Were I to stab you to the heart and bury you beneath the boards of the conservatory, a jury would only find a verdict of justifiable homicide, in that you have concealed from me that—you wanted some champagne! (TRUCULENT *groans and sinks on the seat*) Ha, ha, ha! Why, Truculent, have I frightened you? Did you think I was mad? Not I!—

"'Tis wine, boys, 'tis wine,
That maketh a man divine!
That maketh a man divine!"

(*drags TRUCULENT up from the seat*) Come along! We'll drink in flagons the British Drama and all connected with it—the actors who can't act, and the critics who can criticise! No one can act but me—no one can criticise but you! So many as are in favour of that proposition will signify same in usual manner. (*loudly*) Aye! To the contrary? (*softly*) No. The "Ayes" have it. Carried unanimously. Hurrah! (*is pulling TRUCULENT off, R., who resists*) Come on, man! *Nunc vino pellite curas, cras ingens iterobimus æquor!* To-morrow you shall abuse me in the Daily Howler. I've not forgotten all my Latin, my boy. (TRUCULENT *still resists*) Come along, I say!

"'Tis wine, boys, 'tis wine
That maketh a man divine,
That maketh a man divine;
For better is he
Than twaddle or tea,
And the best of all good company."
Drags TRUCULENT off, R., as he is singing.

Enter MRS. DASHWAY and SIR HAROLD.

MRS. D. Now, Sir Harold, they're just playing a glorious waltz that will set everyone dancing, so we shall be quiet here. (*they sit*)

SIR H. Are you not engaged?

MRS. D. Yes, oh yes; I'm engaged to a tall man, rather bald, big nose, eye-glass, and a way of speaking that makes you long to box his ears.

SIR H. Oh, Lord Carpley Supercill.

MRS. D. I dare say; I didn't catch his name when we were introduced; you never do catch people's names when you're introduced; but he said, (*imitating*) "Happy to meet you, Mrs. Dashway. Had the pleasure of being very intimate with *one* of your husbands." "Mr. Danvers?" I enquired. "No," he said, "my grandfather had the pleasure of being very intimate with *him*."

SIR H. Confound his impudence!

MRS. D. And a short time afterwards I was behind him and heard him inform a friend that he was booked for next dance to that "Dashway woman," so that Dashway woman came direct to you and asked you to bring her here to rest.

SIR H. Upon my soul, if some one doesn't check that fellow, Supercill, I shall think he's reserved by fate for a kicking, the record of which will descend to posterity; and may I be the man to give it to him.

MRS. D. (*laughing*) Oh, I'm so delighted to see you your old self again. What *has* been the matter with you during the last three days? You surely are not still troubling yourself about that unrehearsed startling situation in the library. I was delighted to find that Mr. Potter would have the grace to kneel to a lady at all. I thought that if he ever proposed he would stand bolt upright and say, "Motion made and question put, that Diana Trefusis, spinster, do resolve herself into Mrs. Platitude Potter." Carried without a division. But, I forgot—in the House of Commons the division occurs before the affair is put into the papers; in matrimony it comes afterwards.

SIR H. Mrs. Dashway—confound it—I must make a clean breast of it to some one—it isn't only the recollection of that ridiculous exhibition in the library that troubles me. It's the thought of having to leave Almahurst.

MRS. D. To leave Almahurst! Why should you leave Almahurst because your sister is going to be married.

SIR H. Can it be possible that you do not know that my sister is a rich woman, while I am comparatively poor? After my father's death, and whilst I was on service abroad, Almahurst was for many years let to strangers. Then my sister had a fortune left her by an aunt, and on my final return to England the place was enlarged and much improved, and we ourselves came here to reside. But I could not afford to keep it up myself. (*a pause*) No—it must be let again. Doubtless

my sister would buy it of me, but I could not accept that—that parrot—that cockatoo Potter as a tenant, still less think of him as the owner of Almahurst.

MRS. D. Is there no other way?

SIR H. (*dejectedly*) I can think of none. It must be let.

MRS. D. Would you like me for a tenant?

SIR H. (*looks at her hard—then aside*) No, she can't mean it. (*aloud*) On what terms?

MRS. D. Terms! Shouldn't we leave those to the lawyers? Or shall we settle it all by private contract?

SIR H. Private contract. You to take possession without my giving it up. (*aside*) Phew! I've done it now. (*aloud—continuing*) I don't suppose that you, still young and rich and admired, can care for a poor battered old soldier like myself; but—if—yet—why—if you want Almahurst, those are the only terms you'll get it on.

MRS. D. (*after a moment's pause*) You needn't be so ferocious, Sir Harold. I haven't objected to them yet.

SIR H. (*eagerly*) You don't mean it?

MRS. D. (*giving him her hand*) I do. (*after a pause*) There'll be another of course.

SIR H. Another what?

MRS. D. Another match to make up the three.

SIR H. By Jove—yes—Muriel!

MRS. D. And Sir Bayard.

SIR H. Yes, you think he's fond of her, don't you?

MRS. D. A great deal too fond of her, because she's not fond of him. She likes him—who wouldn't? And she may accept him because she's been out quite four seasons now, and after all it's her business to get married, and business is business and must be attended to—there—don't look so absurdly horrified.

SIR H. (*gravely*) I trust Muriel will only marry a man she really cares for. She would always have a home with me.

MRS. D. (*laughing*) Of course; and you are the dearest of the dear. I may be wrong about Sir Bayard, but I believe her heart, as the novelists say, has long been capital A—nothers. She may think she has forgotten A—nother, or that she no longer cares for him, but she's wrong. She was engaged once was she not?

SIR H. Yes. I was in India at the time, and it was broken off before I came back. I forget the fellow's name.

MRS. D. I heard, but I have forgotten all about the affair. I only knew her by sight then. Shall we go out on the terrace?

Exeunt, R.

Enter MURIEL and SIR BAYARD, L.—he is putting an opera cloak over her shoulders—she has a rose in her hand.

MURIEL. I do not want it really, Sir Bayard. I am too hot already. (*petulantly*) Oh, there is one reason why I do regret the decline of chivalry; in our days, the knights instead of going forth to do battle in honour of their peerless Dulcineas remain at home to overwhelm them with superfluous attentions. (*they sit*)

SIR B. I am sorry, Miss Hepburn, if you are bored; especially if I have helped——

MURIEL. No, no; I beg your pardon, I did not mean that speech for you; but I am vexed and tired—tired of this evening. I was so heartily weary of the season before it was over, so unspeakably glad to escape from its dreadful treadmill round; and yet here to-night I am surrounded by much the same set I have met, over and over again, for so many weeks—hearing the same vapid dribblets of talk, the same dreary commonplaces, the same small sneers. Heigho! if I were a man!

SIR B. And if that calamity were to occur?

MURIEL. (*laughing*) Why, I should try politics, science, art, everything except writing novels—women do that.

SIR B. (*shaking his head*) They do.

MURIEL. But, above all——

SIR B. What?

MURIEL. Travel. (*a pause—then humming*) “*La vie c'est un voyage.*” Oh, dear, I wish it were!

SIR B. (*embarrassed*) Miss Hepburn, a fellow I know told me once, when I had anything important to say, to lead up to it cleverly. I've had something important to say to you for some time; I knew I should never lead up to it myself, for I'm not clever, but I've been led up to it now unawares, and—and I think I'd better make use of the opportunity, in case it shouldn't occur again.

MURIEL. (*laughing*) By all means.

SIR B. In short—er—if you wouldn't object—er—to me as a travelling companion, we could travel as much as you please. (*MURIEL turns her head away*) I suppose you found out long ago that I was very fond of you? I found it out myself, but I was afraid to tell you so. I did not think you could care for me because I believed—if you will excuse my saying it—that you had once liked very much some one else, who no doubt deserved his good fortune much better than I can. For I'm only an average sort of a fellow—very little different from lots of other fellows who are finished off by the same tailor; there's nothing brilliant about me, and you deserve a fellow who is a good deal above the average. But as he don't seem to come,

perhaps you could put up with me. If you can—I'm such a fool I should be bewildered if you spoke to me—will you give me that rose? I shall understand then, and as perhaps you would like to be alone for five minutes afterwards, and as I'm sure in that case that I should, to try and calm myself after such a piece of good fortune, I'll—I'll run away for a short time.

A pause—then she gives him the rose—he takes it, kisses her hand and exit quickly, R.

MURIEL. How generous he is! How whimsical—how kind. *(a pause)* I suppose I ought to be very happy. How I shall be envied—and congratulated. Poor Maurice! How rude we have been to each other. *(rising and walking quickly up and down)* Oh, I don't believe there are such things as constancy and unalterable devotion in these days. They have vanished before the march of civilization and the increase in the price of provisions. There's that silly old song that says—

“From scene to scene they hurry me, to banish my regret,
And when they win a smile from me, they think that I forget.”

Well, for a long, long time, I did *not* forget him. I thought of him at least—once a fortnight, and that's very often to think of any one you never see and of whom moreover you have been ordered not to think at all; and you ought to obey your pastors and masters and not hanker after forbidden fruit, and do your duty at those balls and evening parties to which you shall be invited. But, oh! I don't feel at all happy. I—I'm not worthy of Sir Bayard. *(sits down again)*

Enter MAURICE, L.

MAUR. Miss Hepburn, I am fortunate; our dance is the next.

MURIEL. Oh, will you--will you--excuse me?

MAUR. As you please. I thought your consent was a mere form; I own that the honour was too great for me. *(she does not seem to hear)* Miss Hepburn, are you ill? *(she shakes her head)* Muriel, can we not forget the wretched past? I will do anything that you wish—leave the stage, devoted as I am to it—take up any profession, any work that you wish. I have struggled, heaven knows how hard, to go away from this house and from you; but I could not, for I love you—I love you.

MURIEL. Stop Maurice—Maurice, it is too late!

MAUR. Too late?

MURIEL. I am engaged—

MAUR. To Bayard? *(she bows her head—slowly, after a pause)* You did right. He has eight thousand a year! *(she covers her face with her hands)*

“New loves are sweet as those that went before.”

New loves for old! Time, like the magician with the lamp in the Arabian tale, passes along with that cry, "New Loves for Old," and you take the old love from the corner of your heart where it has been lying neglected, and exchange it for the glittering, burnished, well-appointed new one. Yet the old love may be the talisman to work your happiness, and the new only a dazzling sham.

MURIEL. (*rising*) You torture me! How can you be so unjust and ungenerous? Sir Bayard is so different.

MAUR. It is easy to be just and generous, and to keep up a handsome establishment of virtues and good qualities on a baronetcy and eight thousand a year!

MURIEL. When I met you, after three years, almost the first words you uttered contained a sneer, which made it impossible for me to speak to you otherwise than coldly or in indignation. Is there no one who suffers besides yourself? I have discovered by accident, within the last week, that, though I am called Sir Harold's ward, I am, in reality, dependent on his charity. My father, in his desire to keep up his position, and see me make a brilliant match, had lived beyond his income, and left next to nothing at his death. This was why Sir Harold was named as my guardian. He knew and trusted his oldest friend. I was told with the greatest delicacy that my father's affairs were somewhat involved, but that a small income was secured for me. I have received it regularly since his death, and only within the last few days has the merest chance revealed to me that it is in fact an allowance from Sir Harold. (*a pause*) Now that I am—that I am engaged, I shall tell him of my discovery, and thank him for his noble generosity. Perhaps had I known that probably by it alone I was saved from going out as a governess, I might have shown myself less haughty and capricious than I fear I—I have sometimes appeared. (*a pause—then putting out her hand, which he takes*) Maurice—I call you so for the last time—our ways are different. Good-bye. We are deservedly punished; for it is a dreadful crime for two people, poor as we are in the present, and brought up as we have been in the past, to dare to be in love.

MAUR. In love? You still——

MURIEL. Oh, I love you! I have loved you; and shall love no one else in this world!

MAUR. (*drawing her to him and kissing her*) My darling!

MURIEL. Oh, what have I said! Let me go, Maurice? This is cruel! (*breaking from him*) Let me go!

She goes up and exit, L.—MAURICE sinks into his seat, and leans his head upon his arm.

Enter MRS. DASHWAY, R.

MRS. D. Mr. Hamilton!

MAUR. How do you know my name?

MRS. D. I have known it from the moment I met you at Sir Harold's, in London. I have an excellent memory for faces, and I saw you act more than once as an amateur, before you went on the stage. But actors always change their names, and it's no business of mine, so I held my tongue. Do you know Mr. Truculent is unwell?

MAUR. So far as I can make out, he's drunk; though I'm sure I don't know what upon. He seemed to collapse suddenly after two or three glasses of wine,

MRS. D. He was alone in the billiard room for a short time just now. One of the servants went in as he left it, and found a letter and part of a newspaper on the floor. He supposes Mr. Truculent must have dropped them, for no one else has been in there. (*MAURICE attentive*) But yet the servant does not understand the affair, because the letter is not opened, nor is it addressed to Mr. Truculent; so he gave both letter and paper to me. (*showing him the letter*) Maurice Hamilton, Esq.

MAUR. (*catching the letter from her eagerly*) Excuse me. (*tears open the letter and glances over it, then staggers back*)

MRS. D. Are you ill? Bad news?

MAUR. No—no, good. But the paper that he found—the paper. (*she hands it to him—aside*) The Supplement—yesterday's—yes, here is the death! Oh, that scoundrel Truculent! (*passes his hand over his forehead*) I feel quite dazed and faint. Why has he done this? Ah, to gain Bayard time, of course. (*drops the Supplement on the ground, puts the letter in his pocket, aloud to MRS. DASHWAY*) If you will excuse me, I will go out on the terrace. The news, coming suddenly, has rather upset me. I feel a little—a little faint. *Exit, R.*

MRS. D. (*looking after him*) What does it all mean I wonder! (*suddenly*) Ah, he's the man that was engaged to Muriel Hepburn! Of course, I remember it all now. What a complication. (*picking up the Supplement*) What is there in here that interests him? (*looks down the paper*) Oh! Terence Hamilton dead! Why, then, our stage-manager is one of the Lort Park Hamiltons; I didn't know that before. And, as Terence Hamilton had no children living, Mr. Maurice must have come into the property—ten thousand a year at the least. This is becoming interesting.

Enter MURIEL, L.

Not dancing?

MURIEL. (*sitting down wearily*) No, I am engaged—but I have not the heart to dance.

MRS. D. (*unsympathetically*) Oh.

Enter SIR BAYARD, *quietly*, L.—*he stops suddenly behind some plants on hearing MURIEL'S next speech.*

MURIEL. I—I am wretched; Sir Bayard has proposed to me, and I have accepted him.

MRS. D. Is that all. I know dozens of girls who will take your wretchedness off your hands at a moment's notice. (*MURIEL turns her head away—MRS. DASHWAY changes her manner*) Poor child! (*MURIEL looks up surprised*) Don't you care for him?

MURIEL. Not in—in that way; I like him, every one must, but—oh, you wouldn't understand.

MRS. D. Are you sure? Listen: Once upon a time you were engaged to Maurice Hamilton—don't start—and perhaps you have found out that you are not altogether indifferent to Maurice Lawley.

MURIEL. How have you discovered—

MRS. D. Never mind. Am I right?

MURIEL. Yes—I—I—lost sight of him for so long, and when we met so unexpectedly we were rude to each other, and I imagined I disliked him; and when Sir Bayard proposed to-night I did not say Yes, but I let him suppose that I meant it. And then Maurice came, and I found he was just the same to me as ever. Oh, what shall I do.

MRS. D. Be brave; tell Sir Bayard what you have told me.

SIR B. (*coming forward*) He has heard. (*a long pause*)

MRS. D. (*to* SIR BAYARD) I will leave you. (*aside*) Poor fellow.

Exit, L.

SIR B. Miss Hepburn, I told you just now that you deserved a very much better sort of fellow than I; I didn't know then that it was to you Maurice had been engaged—I wish I had known it; I ought to have guessed it from the first, but I'm such a fool that I didn't. I'm not surprised at what you told Mrs. Dashway; it's quite natural; it wasn't likely you could care for me. It's all a mistake; you gave me no promise, only a rose—I may keep that?

MURIEL. Oh, yes; you are so good—so generous, and I—I have behaved so badly to you—letting you believe—Will you forgive me?

SIR B. No, no, there is nothing to forgive. I was to blame—it's all over now—no one need know anything about it. If you can, manage the next—the dance before supper—with me, otherwise people might talk. (*waltz music heard*) There it is.

MURIEL. (*giving him her hand*) I shall never forget!

Exeunt into ball room.

Enter MAURICE, R.

MAUR. (*speaking off*) Yes, that's right. Have you brought a glass too?—that will do. (*comes down with a champagne bottle and a glass, which he puts on table*) In five minutes the supper room will be invaded, so I've fled hither for peace. Base is the slave that eats! (*tosses off a glass of wine*)

“ 'Tis wine, boys, 'tis wine,
That maketh a man divine!”

No; it's twelve thousand a-year!

Enter POTTER, L., he looks round, and then comes down—
MAURICE is filling his glass again—POTTER looks astonished.

MAUR. (*turning*) What, Potter, my sapient legislator—my second-hand Cicero!

POTTER. (*surprised*) Mr. Lawley! I—I came to——

MAUR. To look for Miss Trefusis—I know it, Potter, I know it. Nay, never blush to tell your love; it's creditable to you, highly creditable at your age.

POTTER. (*angrily*) Mr. Lawley!

MAUR. Nothing of the sort—Hamilton!—Maurice Hamilton, of Lort Park, who does you the honour to drink your health. You are surprised to see this (*holding up the champagne bottle*) here.

POTTER. I am more than surprised, sir. I consider it as disgraceful to see that here as to see you here in your present condition.

MAUR. Bah! my condition a short time back *was* disgraceful, because I was as poor as a rat; but now—now I am rich—rich—Why don't you cringe? (*puts down the bottle and glass, and catches POTTER by the arm*) Cringe, sir, cringe. Here, (*waving the letter*) are the talismanic words that invest me with power over such hearts as yours.

“ 'Tis cash, boys, 'tis cash,
That maketh a man divine,
That maketh a man divine.”

POTTER. Mr. Lawley, you are inebriated; this conduct is disgraceful!

MAUR.

Happy, happy, happy pair!
None but the rich,
None but the rich,
None but the rich
Deserve the fair!

My pensive Potter, wherefore look you sad? I had a grandmother; she had a donkey, and when I looked into that

donkey's face I saw that it was sad; and you are sad, my Potter. Wherefore sad? Miss Trefusis is rich, and she deserves you, for you are fair—passing fair, my Potter—passing fair, my junior Demosthenes.

POTTER. (*struggling*) Mr. Lawley, this conduct——

MAUR. After supper, you shall go into that room, as my herald, and proclaim that I have twelve thousand a year, and see then who will be engaged when I ask her. Stay, first I must drink two healths. (*half fills the glass*)

Enter SIR BAYARD, L.—he pauses in astonishment.

Miss Trefusis! (*empties the glass*) Now a bumper—Miss Hepburn! (*raises the glass*)

SIR B. (*coming down and catching his arm*) Maurice, are you mad?

MAUR. No—old fellow—rich—rich!

SIR B. (*looking at him*) What is the matter with you? What are those things doing here? (*pointing to bottle and glass*) Is it fair to use Miss Hepburn's name in that way?

POTTER *rushes off, L.*

MAUR. I have as much right as you to use it. More—Four thousand a year more I say! (*lifting the glass*)

SIR B. (*stopping him*) You shall not drink that!

MAUR. I say I will!

SIR B. You shall not. What is the matter with you? Miss Hepburn begged me to come and look for you. No—you shall not drink it.

MAUR. I will! (*breaks away*)

Enter MURIEL and TRUCULENT and MRS. DASHWAY hastily.

Muriel Hepburn! (*empties the glass and dashes it on the ground*)

MRS. D. What on earth are you two about?

MAUR. (*sobered*) It is my fault. I am alone to blame. (*sees TRUCULENT*) No, not alone; there is that——

MRS. D. (*stopping him*) Hush! (*taking him aside and speaking rapidly*) He has told me everything, and you must forgive him, and hold your tongue in consideration of the news I have for you. Sir Bayard and Muriel are not engaged.

MAUR. Not?

MRS. D. No; and yet she has heard nothing; she thinks you are still a poor actor. Ask her—ask her now—a look will do it.

MAUR. Mrs. Dashway has told me——

MURIEL. Yes—I—I am heartily ashamed of myself.

MAUR. And am I forgiven?

MURIEL. It is for you to forgive.

MAUR. And to hope.

MURIEL. (*after a pause*) For what?

MAUR. I need not tell you; you understand what the question is; is the answer Yes or No?

MURIEL. You still wish it, after all that has passed? (*pauses, looks at him, smiles and gives him her hand*) Well, then—Yes!

MAUR. And so after all the Princess gets back the old love?

MURIEL. Yes, the dingy, ugly, disreputable old love and the wicked magician—but there has been no wicked magician in this version——

MAUR. Oh, yes, there has; you shall hear about him presently, and something else that will surprise you.

MURIEL. (*taking his arm*) And Maurice—the new love was no sham in this story; it was much too good for me.

MAUR. And you are willing to take me—Maurice Lawley, mind—not Maurice Hamilton?

MURIEL. Yes.

MAUR. Have you considered what your position will be? Have you thought what we shall do?

MURIEL. Yes—and first of all I think—we will go starring in the Provinces together.

MAUR. Perhaps we might do better even than that. We might have a theatre of our own.

MURIEL. Of our own! Why where should we get the money?

MAUR. I'll tell you. (*they go up together*)

SIR B. (*to TRUCULENT*) Yes—but I don't see why, because I lent you the money to save your nephew from ugly consequences when he committed forgery, you should go in for felony on my account.

MRS. D. Never mind, Sir Bayard. Gratitude of any sort is very rare. And as for you—you're worthy of your name.

Enter SIR HAROLD, POTTER, and MISS TREFUSIS.

SIR H. (*irritably*) I say, what in the world are you all doing here? Potter told me——

MRS. D. It's all right—we've been making up the third match.

SIR H. What, my dear Bayard! I congratulate you. (*shakes hands with him*)

SIR B. Thank you; much obliged; but it's somebody else.

SIR H. Eh?

MURIEL. It is Mr. Hamilton, to whom I am engaged.

SIR H. Mr. who? I don't know him. This is Mr. Lawley!

MRS. D. Not a bit of it!—Mr. Maurice Hamilton; to whom Muriel was once engaged, and who is now, by the death of his uncle, owner of one of the finest estates in Ireland.

SIR H. Oh well, it's all right, no doubt. I'll hear about it by-and-bye. But now people will think something has happened. Supper! Supper! Ha, ha, ha! We'll all be married together!

SIR B.

MAURICE. } We!

OTHERS. }

SIR H. (*demurely*) Mrs. Dashway and I, and—— (*they laugh and congratulate him*)

POTTER. (*to MISS TREFUSIS*) She's got him.

MISS T. He's doomed!

POTTER. The Life Assurance Offices should have a special rate for her husbands.

MISS T. Can nothing be done. Is there no law to make her stop *somewhere*?

POTTER. None I fear.

MISS T. It's monstrous! It's too much—I mean too many. I think there should be *some* limit to her marrying powers.

POTTER. I'll run a short Act through the House next Session.—Lady Trefusis's Marriage Fatality Bill.

MISS T. But that won't save Harold.

MRS. D. We'll build a theatre of our own. I'll lay the foundation stone, and we'll bury beneath it copies of all the newspapers, the current coins of the realm, and (*tapping TRUCULENT on the shoulder*) a specimen of the critic of the period.

TRUC. In that case, Mrs. Dashway, I shall die, as I have lived, a martyr to bad acting.

SIR H. Supper!

MRS. D. The stock company is already complete. (*takes SIR HAROLD'S arm*) The military uncle, Sir Harold; the second old man, Mr. Potter—ha, ha! the irreproachable ideal hero, Sir Bayard; the unscrupulous villain and stage-manager, Mr. Maurice Hamilton; and——

MAUR. And leading tragic actress, Mrs. Dashway.

MRS. D. We'll go to our theatre every year, escape from the land of realities, and take a holiday——

MAUR. In Stage-Land.

(*as the Curtain falls they are going off, as if to supper—*

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